Faith & Inspiration

Whence Comes Justification

By Vincent V. Marshburn

Human beings possess a remarkable capacity to rationalize.

This occurs on various levels of thought and emotion as our minds attempt to ascertain, analyze, and assess. Insofar as deliberate reflection and deduction are concerned, this cognitive talent has facilitated our ability to advance diverse methods and mechanisms which support and enhance civilization and society.

This same ingenuity can cultivate a sense of justification for any manner of ethical principles and consequent behaviors. Part of the challenge is in determining the fundamental veracity or legitimacy of such principles. Some might insist that humanity inherently possesses the moral insight and fortitude to define its own standards. Others will posit that their individual interpretation of supposedly sacred precepts obviously aligns perfectly with God's words and intentions. Such arguments often attempt to claim a moral high ground that may not always be substantiated — or at least, for which there is not always broad consensus.

Indeed, what we find is that people can be quite creative and stalwart — or, unhelpfully, even pretentious and condescending — when it comes to validating or advocating their perceived pretext. The Bible itself exposes the kind of mock outrage and aggrievement that we often exhibit when confronted with opposition to our questionable assertions. From the beginning, humankind was prone to denial, deflection, and dismissal. One can almost envision the panic and resentment they felt as first Adam then Eve scrambled to shift the blame for their actions which led to their expulsion from Eden, as if it were somehow possible to divert God's omniscience and righteousness (Genesis 3:12-14).

At times, we may feel truly and completely convinced we are warranted in our pursuit of a particular ideal or presumed righteous cause. The Bible informs us that our susceptibility for self-justification can be based on simply ignoring or manipulating truth (Proverbs 28:5; Romans 1:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:10); or it may derive from pride (Psalm 10:2; Obadiah 1:3, Matthew 23:1-7; Luke 18:9-14); or even an obsession with legalism (Isaiah 29:13; Luke 11:37-54; Galatians 3:1-5, 5:4).

Very often, our self-justification seeks to rationalize our actions as being motivated by selflessness or altruism. We may insist that we are manifesting concern for truth, justice, or the welfare of others, when in fact we may end up being misguided, confused, or even deluded. It can be difficult to see beyond our own perceptions of rightness. Perhaps ironically, our fixation on "being right" can lead to compromise and may even jeopardize the very principles we are claiming to uphold.

In a two-episode story arc of the "Star Trek: Voyager" television series, the crew of the titular starship encounter another Federation ship in the distant part of the galactic quadrant in which they are currently stranded. The other ship, the Equinox, and its crew have experienced their own challenges and adversities during their own struggle to return home. Voyager responds to the Equinox's distress signal and manages to rescue some of the crew from an attack by space-borne aliens who only appear momentarily through "interspatial" fissures.

Captain Kathryn Janeway welcomes the Equinox's captain, Rudolph Ransom, and his surviving crew aboard and offers shelter and assistance as they contemplate their mutual predicaments. While grateful for Janeway's aid, Ransom is somewhat evasive when discussing the nature of the aliens, their motivation for attacking, and his crew's efforts to ward off the aliens.

Janeway and Ransom do discuss their respective approaches to maintaining Federation and Starfleet regulations, procedures, and principles under extraordinary circumstances. They address their various mixed efforts to maintain adherence to the Prime Directive, the fundamental doctrine of non-interference that is intended to inform and guide personnel in their interactions with alien cultures. They both admit that they have on occasion been compelled to "bend the rules" and deviate from this directive to varying degrees for the sake of the safety and lives of those under their command.

Through the course of the story, it is discovered that the source of the aliens' animosity is the Equinox crew's exploitation of the aliens as a power source for their ship. Janeway and the Voyager crew come to realize that the aliens' hostility is predictable and understandable. Of course, Janeway confronts Ransom on this matter, and he insists that these extreme measures are fully justified by their severe situation. Their bitter disagreement results in an irreconcilable rift between them, and Ransom and his crew flee aboard the now repaired Equinox, intent on continuing to harvest the aliens.

At some point during Voyager's pursuit of the Equinox, Janeway's single-minded preoccupation with apprehending Ransom puts the ship at risk. Voyager's first officer, Chakotay, defies her in an effort to defuse her ire and help provide a more balanced perspective.

CHAKOTAY: Want your First Officer's advice?

JANEWAY: Allow me. Our deflector's losing power, and when it fails, we'll be defenseless. It's Voyager we should be worrying about, not the Equinox.

CHAKOTAY: You'd make a great First Officer. It's advice worth taking. ... I don't blame you for being angry, but you can't compromise the safety of this ship to satisfy some personal vendetta.

JANEWAY: I appreciate your candor. Now let me be just as blunt. You're right, I am angry. I'm damned angry. He's a Starfleet Captain, and he's decided to abandon everything this uniform stands for. He's out there right now, torturing and murdering innocent lifeforms just to get home a little quicker. I'm not going to stand for it. I'm going to hunt him down no matter how long it takes, no matter what the cost. If you want to call that a vendetta, go right ahead.

Clearly, Janeway feels absolutely justified in her path of wrath. Eventually, after some ethically debatable choices and actions, Chakotay convinces Janeway to resort to a more measured approach. By the end of the story, she concedes that his objections may have had legitimate justifications of their own after all.

We may derive some sense of satisfaction in "being right" on our own terms, convinced that our convictions are flawless and unimpeachable. Of course, we should consider if we are allowing our assumptions and ego to supersede spiritual truth and reality.

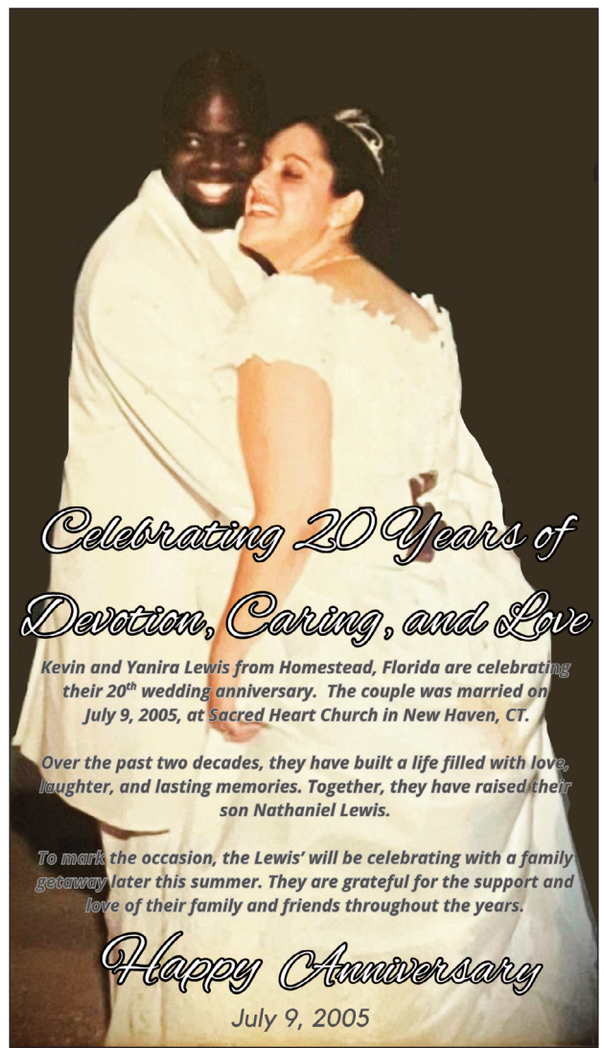
Proverbs 21:2 describes how human understanding and reasoning may seem to be correct and effective, but God discerns our innermost intentions. Due to our sinful nature, our attempts at justification often tend to be faulty and self-serving.

As believers, we know that we are not ultimately reliable sources of discernment of virtue. And so, whence comes justification? It turns out, we do not rely on self-justification, but rather true justification is a gift from God conferred on us by his grace through the redemptive work of Jesus, procured by faith (Romans 3:24-25).

Rationalization is not necessary, merely acceptance and submission to the love of God that makes us whole.

Announcements

Couple Celebrates 20 Years


Celebrating 20 Years of
Devotion, Caring, and Love
Kevin and Yanira Lewis from Homestead, Florida are celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary. The couple was married on July 9, 2005, at Sacred Heart Church in New Haven, CT.
Over the past two decades, they have built a life filled with love, laughter, and lasting memories. Together, they have raised their son Nathaniel Lewis.
To mark the occasion, the Lewis' will be celebrating with a family getaway later this summer. They are grateful for the support and love of their family and friends throughout the years.
Happy Anniversary
July 9, 2005

Lifestyle

Student Excels in Stock Simulation

123RF

By Charlie Hudson

Notwithstanding the television commercials urging people to invest in stocks, it remains a major decision—especially for those with little understanding of how to proceed.

This is one of the key reasons the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association (SIFMA) Foundation created the Stock Market Game in 1977: to engage students and help improve their skills in math, economics, and personal finance.

Atala Montessori eighth grader Samantha Corletto not only found the experience exciting—she also took first place in Florida in the SIFMA Foundation's National InvestWrite Competition.

A recent press release shared the news.

"Samantha Corletto, an eighth-grade student at Atala Montessori School in Homestead, Florida, is planting the seeds for a financially secure future.

Her thoughtful, long-term investment plan earned a prestigious first-place win in Florida in the SIFMA Foundation's Fall 2024 InvestWrite competition, the nation's premier youth financial writing challenge.

Chosen from thousands of entries, Samantha's essay demonstrated a clear understanding of diversification, long-term investing, and risk—core concepts that define smart financial decision-making. Samantha and teacher Kristine Burns were honored by the SIFMA Foundation in a ceremony held on May 29, 2025."

InvestWrite serves as the capstone to the SIFMA Foundation's Stock Market Game, a curriculum-based simulation in which students manage a hypothetical $100,000 portfolio of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and cash.

A passage from Corletto's winning essay illustrates her process:

"This school year, we played the Stock Market Game in my 8th grade math class. We played in teams and individually.

Our teacher showed us videos to help us understand the Stock Market Game and how it works. She also made us do some research and think about what companies and brands we have at home and list them.

At first, I didn't really understand how the Stock Market Game worked and how to make good investments. I've played the game before, but I've never done very well in the past. When my class played the Stock Market Game this year, I actually began to understand how to make good investments and how to earn a lot of money.

Looking at the 52-week range and using my critical thinking skills really helped me to do well this year."

She also elaborated on her understanding of diversification and explained why she chose thirty specific companies to invest in; only four of the thirty showed minimal losses. The lessons she gained will remain with her, as she wrote in her essay summary:

"Investing in the stock market can be useful for me in the future because though I could be at high risk of losing money, I also have a higher chance of earning more money than just putting all my earnings into a bank account and slowly earning money by saving it. All the things that I've learned this year can help me know what to look for when buying stocks, and when it's a good time to buy, sell or hold a stock."

Dr. Kristine Burns, one of the original founders and co-owners of Atala Montessori School for Creative Expression, introduced the program on a trial basis in Spring 2022.

Each year since, an Atala student has placed highly. Maritza Castellon-Colon, the school's new co-owner, is equally enthusiastic about retaining the program.

"Proud school, proud teachers, proud for Ms. Corletto and her superb accomplishment!!"

To learn more about Atala Montessori, visit *https://atalamontessori.org*, email *information@atalamontessori.org*, or visit the campus at 240 N. Krome Avenue, Homestead.

For inquiries, call (786) 738-1210.

To learn more about the SIFMA Foundation and how schools or teachers can participate in the Stock Market Game, visit *www.sifma.org/foundation*.

Homestead Council and Developer Discuss the Future of the Homestead Sports Complex

Ball field at Homestead Sports Complex. City of Homestead

By David Volz

The Homestead Council is expressing strong support for a potential major sports and entertainment complex in Homestead.

The developer — VSGS Facilities — has shown interest in developing the Homestead Sports Complex, which would include a professional-level soccer team and a wide range of athletic and community events.

The proposed investment exceeds $275 million and would come at no cost to the City, making it one of the most significant development projects in Homestead's history.

The Council voted to direct staff to continue working with VSGS, with a second presentation expected in July.

The developer is seeking a 99-year lease from the City to construct, operate, and manage the recreational facilities.

The complex would feature six multi-purpose sports fields and a 10,000-seat stadium designed to host professional-level football, soccer, lacrosse, rugby, and other major events.

Council members expressed excitement about the potential economic and recreational benefits for the community.